

Southeast Region **Fire Division Report FY2017**





From the Chief

In FY16, the Region was able to focus much of its attention and energies on prescribed burning, but in FY17 we were faced with the challenges of droughts, wildfires, hurricanes and screw worms. The FY began with the New World Screw Worm invading the Florida Keys affecting the endangered Key Deer. The Region responded with IMTs that had a large component of ICS trained fire staff.

Later in the fall, the central part of the Region, particularly the Appalachians, experienced a very busy fall wildfire season. While Service lands outside of Mississippi were minimally affected, many of our qualified personnel responded to the Fall fire season in the Appalachians. The drought shifted to south Georgia and Florida in the spring. Many of the Florida Refuges were under severity with high fire activity at the same time Okefenokee NWR had a long duration fire impacting multiple jurisdictions.

As soon as fire activity was slowing down in Southeast, hurricanes and western fires began to demand resources, and the Southeast responded. While four hurricanes needed response actions, Irma and Maria were significant to our Region. Irma, a Cat 4 storm that damaged multiple stations in Georgia and Florida, did its most intense damage to the Florida Keys. An all hazard IMT spent almost two weeks stabilizing affected stations, especially National Key Deer Refuge. As that IMT was finishing up Maria, a Cat 5 storm, made landfall in Puerto Rico. The damage to the islands was severe and extensive, and the Region’s response had to negotiate numerous and substantial logistical challenges.



Even with the large incident response workload, our ever shrinking workforce still managed to successfully treat almost 100,000 acres with prescribed fire. We worked collaboratively with our partners to expand the Service conservation mission through the Region and we supported the interagency community in many efforts and at all levels. It was a busy year; and we did all this safely and without injury.

It’s comforting to know that our responder team is resilient; and even though we’re tired, we are ready to address the next challenge. Our folks have done a remarkable job in recognizing the lessons learned from all these events, correctly adjusting the strategy and tactics to the realities of risks encountered vs available resources, and are intentional in “recharging” between events. Whatever the next challenge, I’m confident this group of professionals will be safe and successful.

*Front, inside and back covers:
West Mims Fire at Okefenokee NWR this
year; credit: USFWS/Josh O'Connor.*

Zone 1

Year Overview

Zone 1 encompasses the National Wildlife Refuges located in North Carolina, with fire staff located at three of those refuges in the central portion of the Zone.

Wildfire

The trend of higher precipitation experienced for the past several years seems to be moderating. While the average annual rainfall here is 50”, we received only 37” during the past fiscal year, mostly concentrated during last winter and summer. One notable reason we experienced lower than average rainfall was the lack of any tropical systems impacting the Zone.

This distribution provided opportunities for our prescribed fire program to complete several burns, as well as affording Zone personnel the ability to participate in assisting other areas of the country on fire details and assignments. Since the precipitation was fairly regularly, occurring we did not enter any seriously dry periods, and fire danger remained moderate.

Only 12 wildfires were reported within Zone 1 during 2017; six at Cedar Island, four at Pocosin Lakes and one each at Alligator River and Mackay Island NWRs. While most were small, Zone firefighters responded to the 69-acre Poco fire in early March and again to the 14-acre Allen fire in June, both on Pocosin Lakes NWR. Both fires involved the organic soils prevalent across the Zone and proved difficult to extinguish.

Fuels Management

During FY17, Zone staff were finally able to address some of the backlog of burn projects that have developed across the refuges. Zone firefighters were able to treat 780 acres at Pocosin Lakes, 853 acres on Pea Island, 1,888 acres at Mackay Island, and 8,467 acres on Alligator River. This occurred in 16 treatments and totaled 11,988 acres across the Zone. Burns are planned each year at Cedar Island NWR, however due to the distance from our core refuges, which necessitates mobilizing crew and

equipment for an extended period, the lack of suitable burn windows prevented us from attempting project work there. We continue to maintain the fuel breaks and watch for appropriate burn opportunities at Cedar Island.

Additionally, Zone 1 personnel assisted the North Carolina State Forest Service (NCSFS) on two burn treatments, while NCSFS assisted on one of the larger prescribed burns on Alligator River NWR. We also used personnel from Great Dismal Swamp NWR to assist us on our Mackay Island project.

Zone Staff Assignments

While fire danger remained low across the Zone in FY17, elsewhere the conditions were elevated. Zone personnel assisted on fires in western North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana within the region. We were heavily involved supporting the wildfires in the southern Appalachians, including Boteler and Chimney Tops 2, in the Fall of 2016. Cory Waters and Amy Midgett were especially busy by supporting multiple assignments for the FWS helicopter as it assisted on fires across the Great Basin this past summer. Once the spring fire season got under way, the West Mims fire broke out at Okefenokee NWR. Response to this fire alone resulted in 13 different staff members fulfilling 23 assignments. In addition, 16 staff were assigned to 21 details on other fires over the course of the year. 11 of the fire staff also participated in 15 severity, stand-by, and hurricane response assignments. This included responses to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as severity assignments across the Region, as well as to the Pacific Northwest.

Training

During FY17 all Zone firefighting personnel attended RT 130 training. Additionally, firefighters from the NPS and NCFS were invited and attended. Annual refresher training was also conducted for all personnel requiring currency in the following qualifications;

chainsaw, ATV operator, helicopter crewmember/manager, and plastic sphere dispensing. In addition, several of the Zone’s fire crew are members of various IMTs and attended the team meetings held in early spring.

Fire staff provided Defensive Driving and AED/Basic first aid refreshers to Refuge staff in Manteo. We also helped develop and conduct joint fire equipment/safety training with local resources from the NCFS.

Of Note

Cory Waters is completing the instructor taskbook for A-312; Water Ditching. He continues to serve on the Interagency Aerial Ignition Committee of the NWCG. Additionally, Cory has played an important role serving as the helicopter manager for the FWS ship when it is needed on assignments.

Lisa Meekins continues to maintain qualifications as a fully qualified EMT with the state of NC, a task that requires much training and dedication. Continuing education is required, and Lisa is involved with the local EMS assisting in medical emergencies across Dare County.



Firefighters Jeff Swain (driving) and Cory Waters conduct a burn on Pea Island NWR in February 2017, credit USFWS/Bert Plante.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Kenny Powell		S-212		HEQB
Lisa Meekins	EMT continuing, L-280, L-967 All Hazards Logistics			ORDM
Eric Meekins	Helo Mgr. Workshop			
Cory Waters	RX-341, A-312 Train the trainer	A-225, IAT, A-110, PLDO, S-212, A-312	Instructor	
Bobby Govan			FAL3	FAL3

Zone 2

Year Overview

Zone 2 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in Georgia and South Carolina hosting fire resources at five stations across the Zone.

FY17 was a busy year for the fire program, with climate conditions that moved from flood to fire and back again. Hurricane Matthew swept up the Atlantic Coast impacting most of our refuges on October 8th 2016. Matthew was a strong Category 2 hurricane by the time it reached the Georgia coast. Fortunately the eye remained just off the coast until it made landfall north of Charleston, South Carolina as a low Category 1 Hurricane. As the fiscal year was nearing an end, Hurricane Irma crossed into Georgia on September 6th of 2017. Fortunately, Irma slowed to a tropical storm as it moved across Okefenokee NWR and headed north towards Atlanta. Though Irma was not as strong as Matthew, it still caused serious flooding on refuge lands. FWS Type 3 teams helped us get back to normal operations from both storms, but impacts can still be seen on many of our refuges.

The middle of the year brought serious drought conditions to South Georgia and Florida. By April, Okefenokee went into severity and brought in additional resources to prepare for the wildfire that was soon to come.

Wildfire

2017 was a big year for wildfire in Zone 2 with the West Mims fire at Okefenokee being the focus from early April until well into July. West Mims started with a lighting strike on April 6th and continued to grow until heavy rains stopped its growth around May 21st. The fire totaled 152, 515 total acres burned with a cost of 51 million dollars. Growth on the most active days exceeded 20,000 acres with some runs approaching 10 miles a day. West Mims was the third largest fire on Okefenokee in 10 years, following Big Turnaround in 2007 and Honey Prairie in 2011. The West Mims fire was confined to refuge lands south of the Suwanee Canal



A Very Large Airtanker (VLAT) drops fire retardant on the West Mims Wildfire at Okefenokee NWR, credit: USFWS.

this year, unlike the refuge-wide fires of 2007 and 2011. West Mims did create some devastating losses of timber on private lands adjacent to the refuge and threatened several local communities. Fortunately, no homes were lost; but four outbuildings were destroyed on private lands. On refuge lands the fire was beneficial and provided positive resource impacts much like that of a prescribed fire. We are seeing subtle, but absolute changes in fuels and fire behavior following the fires of 2007 and 2011. The fire on refuge lands is often much easier to manage than on adjacent private lands. Issues containing the fire occurred when it spotted- or moved into an area that had not burned in either of the previous two large fires. It should be noted that the West Mims fire burned into an area of the refuge that had no recorded history of burning in over 50 years. Long Term Analysts (LTANs) assigned to the West Mims fire have helped us create new ways of monitoring large fire trends that will tie fire danger and water levels together better than ever. Lessons learned will help us prepare for the next large fire at Okefenokee.

Apart from the West Mims fire, the year began with the Zone offering plenty of support to our interagency partners in the mountains of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee during record-setting drought conditions in the Appalachians. Refuge fire numbers were high, with17 fires on refuge lands for a total of 115,191 acres burned. 6 of our 17 zone refuges experienced wildfires this year. Carolina Sandhills NWR had the highest number of starts with eight refuge fires ranging from less than an acre to 60 acres in size. Carolina

Sandhills is a great example of how we can show the benefits of a history of prescribed fire making our job easier on unplanned fire starts. Fires on refuge are easier to contain, and burn with lower intensity due to managing fuel loads with prescribed fire.

Fuels Management

Fuel project numbers were down this year largely due to the focus on the West Mims and the mid-season drought conditions. Zone 2 finished the year with 19,771 acres treated in 51 treatment units. These numbers are half of what was accomplished in the previous year’s record of almost 40,000 acres. The good news from the West Mims fire, as was mentioned previously, is the benefit to refuge lands from the fire. If you counted the acres that West Mims burned on upland units that are managed under fuels projects you could add another 17,000 acres treated at Okefenokee. Piedmont NWR was able to complete all of their planned units ,although they did reduce their target acres due to the recent impacts of ips beetles on pines in central Georgia. Piedmont posted the highest numbers of any refuge across the zone with 7,656 acres treated.

Unfortunately, the highly successful Resilient Landscape (RL) program which has helped us manage longleaf habitat and helped boost prescribed fire numbers in the South Atlantic LCC for the last three years has ended. The RL program allowed Zone 2 to hire up to eight seasonal firefighters to augment our burn program as well as funding an exclusive use helicopter contract for five months out of the year.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	NC, OR, GAOff-Station Assignments
Brantley Boatright					FL
Cory Bryant	A110			HMGB	UT
Rocky Chesser					FL
Reggie Forcine			HEB1	DIVS	GA, FL
Andy Heisey	Eng Academy			TFLD	GA, FL, CA
Terri Jenkins		CMAT team, Ready Set, Go	LOFR		GA, FL
Reese Kerbow			OSC2		TX, GA, FL, MT
Fed Privett					MT, FL
Nathan Herron				HMGB	ID, UT, FL, GA
Toby Price	L380				GA, FL, MT, ID
John Mason					NC, TN, OK, GA, NV, UT, ID, FL
Carl Schmidt					GA
Matt Smith					FL, TN, CO NT, CA, ID, UT
Randy McLain				TFLD	CO, WY, ID
Derrick Odegard				ICT4	SC, GA, CO, WY, ID
Mark Parker		S230	DIVS		SC, GA, WY, UT
Charles Johnson					GA
Adam McCullough			DIVS		GA, SC, FL, CA
Matt Sutkowski					FL, CA
Bert Wyatt		S212	HEQB		FL, LA, GA
Rob Wood			OSC2		NC, OR, GA

Zone Staff Assignments

With the West Mims fire at home, everyone had plenty of activity without leaving Zone 2, but as conditions slowed we sent folks to help with regional and national efforts. The zone continues to support all three of the Southern Area IMTs with eight employees involved with teams currently. Several staff also helped in leadership roles on Type 3 Teams within the region on both wildfires and storm recovery.

Training

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 refresher trainings.

Of Note

Terri Jenkins continues to help us out with local Fire Department partnerships and completed Ready Set Go training

with two departments. The Ready Set Go program was successfully used during the West Mims fire to prepare local residents in the fire area.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Congratulations to Mark Parker for receiving the Regional Fire Leadership Award for excellence in prescribed fire, Mark has a great track record of burning at Carolina Sandhills and provides support throughout the Zone. Terri Jenkins was selected as the recipient of the Robert E. Browning Jr. Award for excellence in fire prevention work. Reese Kerbow accepted an award for his leadership on the Stoney Ridge fire of 2009 in the coordination of an aggressive burnout operation that protected multiple homes, infrastructure, and natural resources on the Eastern Band



Cherokee IHC Crewmember delivers fawn to the green as crews perform burnout on West Mims Wildfire, credit: USFWS/Reggie Forcine.

of Cherokee Indian Tribal lands in North Carolina.

Reggie Forcine continues to represent the FWS on the IHOG Subcommittee. Mark Parker replaced Rick Stuhar on the NFOST (FWS National Fire and Operations Safety Team) and represents Region 4’s concerns nationally.

Staffing Changes

We bid farewell to Keith Penrose (Savannah NWR) this year as he retired after serving the FWS at Savannah NWR for 19 years. Reggie Forcine was hired as Assistant FMO for the Okefenokee fire program. Our congratulation to both!

Zone 4

Year Overview

FY 2017 was an active year for wildfire support. Nationally, hurricane response within the Region and screwworm response in the Florida Keys, but a slow year for wildfires and prescribed fire in Zone 4. The Florida Keys screwworm outbreak required a major response of resources from across the Region. Zone 4 supported this with multiple responders. There was also support from Zone 4 of an active fall fire season in the mountains, and the active spring fire season in Region 4. Lower Suwannee was in severity for nearly seven weeks

in the spring, but had no wildfire occurrences. The summer was very wet over most of the Zone, which put a damper on planned prescribed fires. During late summer, Zone 4 provided support for western wildfires and three major hurricane responses. On refuge lands, 4,324 acres were treated with prescribed fire. Additionally, 2,707 acres were burned on cooperators’ land, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in North Florida and Alabama. Wildfire activity was light throughout the zone. A total of six wildfires occurred on five refuges for a total of 56 acres.

Wildfire

Wheeler NWR had one small wildfire that was responded to by the local fire department. Mt. Longleaf NWR had a 29 acre wildfire that was the result of a planned UXO detonation. Local crews contained the fire using a perimeter of roads. Cahaba River NWR had an escaped prescribed fire that was declared a wildfire of 12 acres. St. Marks NWR also had an escaped prescribed fire that was declared a wildfire, 15 acres in size. St. Vincent had a wildfire caused by lightning strike. This fire was quickly contained as it occurred in a recently

burned area. Lower Suwannee had one wildfire assist for a state fire on adjoining property.

Fuels Management

After a record year in FY16 of 49,558 acres of prescribed fire, FY17 was a very slow year with a total of 4,224 acres of Refuge lands treated with fire. An early season of wildfire, followed by extensive rain from June through August, limited opportunities to perform prescribed burns. St. Vincent NWR had 848 acres of prescribed fire treatments. St. Marks accounted for 1,397 acres. Lower Suwannee NWR accomplished 1,747 acres of prescribed fire and 120 acres of mechanical treatments. One



University of Florida Fire Ecology Student Tyler Gilbert ignites a prescribed fire on the Lower Suwannee NWR, credit: USFWS/Larry Woodward.

unit was treated with prescribed fire at Cahaba River NWR for 190 acres. This unit was burned in cooperation with Alabama TNC. Refuge personnel from Wheeler NWR accomplished 142 acres of prescribed fire at Key Cave NWR.

Zone 4 fire crews assisted federal, state, local, and TNC cooperators on multiple prescribed fires. Four hundred acres of The Nature Conservancy Rock Hill Preserve were treated by prescribed fire with assistance from Zone 4 fire crews. An additional 2,154 acres were burned on the Flintrock property of TNC. Assistance was also provided for prescribed fires at other out of zone Refuges, and several U.S. Air Force installations.

Zone Staff Assignments & Training

Twenty-eight personnel filled 61 resource orders for off-Refuge assignments in FY17; including the Florida Key Deer Refuge screwworm detail, as well as hurricane assignments associated with Harvey, Irma, and Maria, in Puerto Rico and Texas. Zone 4 personnel also responded to multiple wildfire assignments across the Nation, including Florida, Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Montana, Oregon, and Utah.

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 and S-212 refresher trainings. Aviation and PLDO refresher training was held in conjunction with Okefenokee NWR.

Of Note

Fire management staff contributed heavily to general refuge projects

including biological monitoring, maintenance, exotic vegetation control, reforestation, facility construction, road maintenance and repair, and visitor services and outreach.

Wildland fire outreach consisted of many venues from a float in the Springtime Tallahassee parade to presentations at Refuge festivals, and local schools.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Bart Rye was awarded the Regional Fire Management Leadership award. Vic Doig served on the steering committee for the Southern Area Engine Academy. Greg Titus served on the Florida Interagency Coordination Committee (FICC) Operations Committee and the TN/KY Academy steering committee.

Staffing Changes

Trixie Smith left St. Marks NWR for a Supervisory Forestry Tech position on the Apalachicola National Forest. Brian Pippin left St. Marks NWR for an Assistant Team Leader position at Avon Park Air Force Range. Anthony DiMaggio left Lower Suwannee NWR for a Module Leader position at Tyndall AFB. Josh Havird left Lower Suwannee for promotion to the AFMO position at St Marks. Sam Matelski returned to his college degree program after he completed his one year temp appointment. He spent this past summer working a temp fire job at Mid-Columbia NWR Complex in Washington. Dalton Pelt came on board as a Fire Pathways Intern at Lower Suwannee.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Off Station Assignments
Daniel Barrand					GA
Meagan Bieber	S-290, A-312		FAL2	IADP	GA, MT, UT
Craig Cavanna					FL
Vic Doig					NC, PR
John Edwards					GA
Stan Garner					FL
Samantha Gibbs					FL
Josh Havird			RXB2		GA, OR
Joey Lord					GA, MT, PR
Ryan Maier					FL, GA
Sam Matelski				FAL3	
Marysa Milinichik					FL
David Moody			SECM		GA, MT
David Murphy					AZ, PR
Terry Peacock			PIOF		FL
Dalton Pelt	S-131, SA Engine Academy		FFT1	FAL2	NV, UT
Brian Pippin				ICT4	
Travis Pollard			GISS	FIRB	FL, GA
Taija Robinson			EQTR, PTRC, SCKN		TX
Bart Rye					FL, GA
John Stark					GA
Greg Titus		RX-301/341			MT, OR
Robin Will					FL
Lisa Yarbrough					FL



A pine stump burning from a prescribed fire at Cahaba River NWR, credit: USFWS/Greg Titus.

Zone 5

Year Overview

Fiscal Year 2017 was an active year for Zone 5. Wildfire season started off early and picked up steadily in April. The Zone stayed drier than normal through early July, which is not typical. We had several small fires throughout the Zone with a few larger incidents at St. Johns NWR and Merritt Island NWR.

The Zone Fire Management Staff had a slower than normal prescribed burn year due to the extensive drought and long term severity status. Despite the challenges, the Zone did manage to accomplish 12 prescribed burn treatments totaling 13,548 acres. The Zone Fire Management Staff continued to emphasize training for all personnel this year. This included training courses, opportunities on wildfires and prescribed fires within the Zone as well as off Zone fire assignments.

Wildfire

Zone fire management personnel responded to 29 wildfires throughout the Zone this year. We had wildfires on St. Johns NWR and Merritt Island NWR. Several of the fires were large in size exhibiting rapid rates of growth. Zone 5 staff also assisted the Florida Forest Service, Brevard County and Volusia County with wildfire suppression.

Fuels Management

We implemented prescribed burns on several Refuges within the Zone. We accomplished 3,413 acres at Lake Woodruff NWR, 5,435 at Merritt Island NWR, and 4,700 at A.R.M Loxahatchee NWR. We also assisted with prescribed fires with the U.S. Air Force at Canaveral Air Force Station, and Avon Park Bombing Range.

Zone Staff Assignments

Zone personnel assisted with wildfire support in several states this year including Washington, Oregon, Georgia, California, Nevada, North Carolina and Oklahoma. These assignments are key to the development of personnel who respond to wildfires. Three Zone staff also responded to Puerto Rico to assist with hurricane recovery.



Palm trees flare up on the Blackpoint wildfire at Merritt Island NWR, credit: USFWS

Training

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 refresher trainings.

Personnel within the Zone were able to complete 8 task books this year and gain valuable experience in many different fuel types. In addition to receiving training this year, Zone personnel gained instructor experience as well.

Of Note

Merritt Island fire staff developed a “Staff Ride” which reviews the Ransom Road Fire that resulted in the deaths of Beau Sauselein and Scott Maness on June 8, 1981. The Alpha session of the staff ride was implemented on November 2, 2017.

Fire staff from Merritt Island and Lake Woodruff NWRs also assisted agency partners to provide instructors for the Central Florida engine academy hosted by the Florida Forest Service, Brevard County and Volusia County.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Merritt Island NWR was a co-recipient of the Pulaski Award and shared the honor with NASA, U.S. Air Force, 45th Weather Squadron, the Florida Forest Service and Brevard County Fire Rescue.

Staffing Changes

Zone Fire Management Officer Patrick Pearson accepted a new position as the Regional Fire Coordinator for the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska.



USFWS firefighters conducting a small prescribed fire around the Lake Woodruff Headquarters, credit: USFWS/Candice Stevenson.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Ryan Sharpe	Forest Ecology, L-380	S-212, Engine Academy	RXB1	STOP
Chris Wright		S-212, Engine Academy		STOP
Robert Alonso		S-230, S-212, First Aid CPR		STOP
Grant Gifford		S-212		STOP
Paul Koch			ICT 4	STOP
Trevor Canada				FAL3, STOP
Kris Kasper				STOP

Zone 6

Year Overview
FY17 started off dry and it stayed dry into the summer, ending with historic flooding and a Category 4 hurricane. As a result, wildfire activity was above average in SW Florida and the Caribbean with one large fire on Florida Panther NWR, and a very busy year from start to finish.

Wildfire
Since the implementation of the Southwest Florida Interagency Fire and Aviation Group (SWFLCAR), an interagency partnership between USFWS Zone 6 and Big Cypress

National Preserve fire and aviation, the program has worked together to manage a total of 63 wildfires; with 505 acres on FWS lands and 49,100 acres on NPS lands this year. During the fire season, our staff also provided support to Merritt Island NWR, Loxahatchee NWR, Fakahatchee Strand State Park, Picayune Strand State Forest, Everglades National Park, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Collier-Seminole State Park and Florida Forest Service for a total of approximately 50,000 mutual assistance acres.



Burn out operations on MM 87 Wildfire on Florida Panther NWR, credit: USFWS.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Greg Suszek	Power of Communication, Northwest Leadership Seminar	PLDO	ICT3	ENGB, FAL3
Wes O'Connor		MOCC		
Martin Ramos		S130/190		
James Padilla		ATVO, S211, S212		
Connor Bowden	S212		ENGB, FAL3	FFT1, ICT5
Jayve Santiago				ENGB

Fuels Management
SWFLCAR was able to attain fuels treatment accomplishments even with the early wildfire season. Fire management personnel completed 26 prescribed fire treatments, 11 on Florida Panther NWR for 5,680 acres and 15 on Big Cypress Preserve for 48,759 acres this year. 87 individual red-cockaded woodpecker trees were protected, one known panther den, and 37 private inholdings. A few prescribed fire treatments were planned at National Key Deer Refuge and J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR, however environmental constraints prevented the completion of the treatments in this fiscal year. The 920 acres of mechanical treatments across the Zone were completed for maintenance of fire lines, including preparation of Florida Bonneted Bat Roost, and the mechanical treatment to reduce fuels in the Pine Rocklands at National Key Deer. The mechanical work at Key Deer will help to reduce fire intensities when follow-up prescribed burns are implemented, and can also be used for future suppression efforts.

Zone 6 personnel assisted the following refuges and cooperators with Hazardous Fuels Reduction over the course of the year: Florida Forest Service, Merritt Island NWRs, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Fakahatchee Strand State Park, Collier-Seminole State Park and Picayune Strand State Forest.



Roberto Martinez(crew boss) with the Puerto Rico Type 2 IA Crew conducts a burn out on the MM 87 Wildfire at Florida Panther NWR, credit: USFWS.

Zone Staff Assignments
The interagency partnership allowed for more flexibility and opportunities for the SWFLCAR program. Fire staff stayed busy in Florida and the Caribbean with a few breaks for details out west.

Byron Hart did a 30-day FMO detail on the Cumberland Island National Seashore and a 14-day assignment on the Lolo National Forest in Montana. Martin Ramos (CRWB) and Jayve Santiago (FFT1) both went on fire assignments to Oregon and Colorado. Connor Bowden did severity details as a ENGB(t) at Malheur NWR and Mojave National Preserve over the summer. Greg Suszek was on two fire assignment to California as FOBS. In the Caribbean, we successfully mobilized nine type II IA crews for wildfire support. Cass Palmer spent three weeks in San Juan, Puerto Rico working with Hurricane Maria recovery efforts supporting the needs of Refuges, staff and family. The entire Fire Staff spent several months in the Keys at

National Key Deer Refuge supporting the Screwworm Incident.

All red-carded personnel received the Annual Fire Refresher (RT-130) training. Chain Saw refresher (RT-212), Helicopter Crewmember Refresher (RT-271), Plastic Sphere dispenser Operator Refresher (PLDO), and First Aid/CPR training refresher courses were offered for personnel needing those refresher courses. A 40-hour critical training was held for the interagency crew in south Florida that included medical scenarios, a presentation by the Operations Section Chief from the Yarnell Hill fire, and swamp buggy and chainsaw refresher.

Of Note
The interagency relationship continued strong, with mixed-agency crews responding to incidents from Puerto Rico to California. The relationship with the National Park Service also provided trainee assignments for FWS personnel on type-3 and type-1 incidents in south

Florida. These trainee assignments ranged from FFT-1(T) to ICT3(T) and other C&G positions on the Cowbell fire, among others.

Honors, Awards, Committees
The Interagency FMOs recognized employees from both agencies in an annual ceremony presenting a leadership award, an employee of the year award, and recognizing Project Leader Kevin Godsea for his support of personnel from both agencies following Hurricane Irma.

Staffing Changes
Bobby Schat resigned due to a serious automobile accident; he will be missed by the entire program.

Zone 7

Year Overview

FY17 will be long remembered for the extraordinary variety, duration, and intensity of the incidents to which FMO Zone 7 responded. There were three hurricanes, a Screwworm outbreak in the key deer population that lasted six months, and a wildfire that lasted three months. Between the active southeast fire season and hurricanes impacting the region, the west had a very active fire

season which was supported by numerous employees in Zone 7.

It all started with Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. Zone 7 sent ICT3 Sami Gray and 22 responders who served for a total of 154 shifts. This was immediately followed by the response to the New World Screwworm outbreak at the National Key Deer Refuge in Florida. Zone 7 contributed 24 responders for a total of 713 shifts over a five-month

period. Seven responders served two or more assignments.

While Zone FMO Sami Gray served as ICT3 during the early stages of the outbreak, Zone 7 simultaneously experienced its third consecutive year that began with a severity request. Paul Reynolds, FMO at Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR, stepped up to serve as Acting Zone FMO during the severity incident that began in November.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Regina Snow			EQTR/PTRC	
Steven Lewis			EQPM	
Grant Lovato				HECM
Danny Breaux				ENGB
Lucas Doucet	Crawler Dozer, Skid Steer, S-131, S-134, S-215, L-380, Little Bighorn Staff Ride		CRWB, HEQB, FIRB	ICT5, FAL2, FFT1, STOP
Jon Westerby	S-230, S-231, Crawler Dozer, S-215, S-260, MOCC, Backhoe, First Responder/EMR		FIRB, ENGB, HECM	STOP, ICT5, FAL3
Stewart Harrell			DZOP/TPOP, FFT1/ICT5, FAL3	
Jon King	FG-LFML, M-581, S-300	A219, S230, N9016, A219, S212	ICT3	
Quincy McGee			DZOP/TPOP, FFT1/ICT5, FAL3	
Shaun Martinet	HEB2, OSHA, PLDO, Hazwhopper, Aviation training, ICS-400		ICT5, FAL2, HEB2	
Daniel Davis	IS-200B		ICT5	ENGB
Bill Olive	S-290, S-260, Specialty Tracked, Crawler Dozer, Skid Steer, Backhoe Loader, Excavator		FFT1/ICT5	
Melissa Perez	S-260, S-261			
Jay McIlwain				FAL2, ENGB
Rebecca Goosman		S-211		PETM
Sami Gray			OSC2	
Chris Nothstine		S-211	TFLD	STOP
Jonathan Baxter	S-212, S-131, S-133, S-219			
Robin Donohue	S-212			
Andy Radomski	RX-310		ENGB	FFT1
Chris Murphy			FFT1	

There were 12 wildfires totaling 301 acres on Service land in Mississippi and Arkansas, and Service firefighters supported wildfires burning 481 acres on cooperators’ land. The Service helicopter assisted in the severity response. Other zones in FWS Region 4 helped out by providing seven firefighters for 154 total shifts during the response.

Around the time the Screwworm outbreak was winding down, the West Mims Fire started at Okefenokee NWR. Zone 7 sent a total of 31 firefighters, six of them on multiple deployments, for a total of 554 total shifts. Zone 7 also contributed 15 pieces of equipment for 573 total shifts.

As the West Mims Fire began winding down, the western fire season started up. Before the western fires started winding down, the hurricanes returned. 48 FWS employees from Zone 7 responded to Hurricane Irma, for a total of 677 shifts.

In the midst of this relentless succession of incident responses, Zone 7 treated 43,386 acres with prescribed fire in FY17.

Wildfire
South Arkansas/North Louisiana Complex
Arkansas and North Louisiana fire management personnel (including militia) responded or provided support for 6 wildfires locally, totaling 544 acres. These fires occurred at Felsenthal (two fires totaling 469 acres), Pond Creek (two fires totaling one acre), Cache River (one fire of 54 acres) and Dale Bumpers White River (one fire of 20 acres).

Southwest Louisiana Complex
This was a slow year for wildfires in Southwest Louisiana, with only six wildfires for a total of 1,232 acres on FWS lands.

Gulf Coast Complex
The Gulf Coast Complex totaled 15 wildfires that burned 496 acres of FWS-owned lands, with an additional 1,124 acres burning on cooperators’ lands. A single weekend in March accounted for 979 acres, with the Missala Fire and the Compartment G-06 Fire forcing the closure of Interstate 10 for several hours.



Greg Hayes tying it in on a prescribed fire at Felsenthal NWR, credit USFWS/Ame New

Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR
The Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR had nine wildfires this past year and two state assists. 38 acres burned on FWS land.

Southeast Louisiana Complex
Southeast Louisiana had four wildfires during the Severity incident in October 2016 for a total of 50.8 acres on FWS land.

Fuels Management
Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee
The Sam D Hamilton Noxubee NWR completed a total of 7,400 acres of prescribed fires. Two timber sales were marked for a total of 300 acres. Chemical treatments included 350 acres of understory spraying, 10 acres of chemical spraying for invasive and 105 acres herbaceous release spraying over loblolly pines. The Refuge also completed 60 acres of tree planting.

South Arkansas/North Louisiana Complex
Staff from Felsenthal, Dale Bumpers White River, Cache River NWR and The Nature Conservancy conducted a prescribed fire on Cache River NWR for a total of 212 acres. This is the first prescribed fire executed on Cache River NWR since its establishment as a refuge. This burn is a great example of utilization of fire funded personnel, fire militia, collateral duty refuge staff and partnering agencies cooperating to implement a prescribed fire. This prescribed fire is part of a larger native grass restoration project.

The prescribed fire conducted on Upper Ouachita NWR in March of 2017, of 357 acres is the largest, single-day, prescribed fire conducted on that refuge since its establishment.

Total prescribed fire accomplishments on FWS lands in Arkansas and North Louisiana Complex are 11 fires for 2,854 acres.

Gulf Coast Complex
The Gulf Coast Complex conducted 20 prescribed fires totaling 3,585 acres. Partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and The Nature Conservancy, along with help from Southeast Louisiana, collateral duty firefighters and A-D hires made this possible. Another important assist came from the Student Conservation Association Veterans Crew, back for a second season of prescribed fire. What started out as a great year, ended up being an average year due to the onset of torrential rains in May and June.

Southwest Louisiana Complex
This was another good year for the prescribed fire program in Southwest Louisiana. Southwest Louisiana managed to treat 28,413 acres of FWS land, which makes the second year in a row that almost 30,000 acres were treated by fire in Southwest Louisiana.

Southeast Louisiana Complex
Southeast Louisiana completed 8 prescribed fires for a total of 1,134 acres. This was accomplished with help from two Student Conservation Association interns, Katelyn Walters and Chance Miller, The Nature Conservancy in Abita Springs, The National Park Service at Jean Lafitte National Park, collateral duty refuge staff, and AD hires. Southeast Louisiana staff also assisted Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, Southwest Louisiana refuges, and The Nature Conservancy on their prescribed burns.

Zone 7

continued

Zone Staff Assignments

Felsenthal
Matthew Johnson served as the Logistics and Finance Section Chief positions for the Florida Keys Screwworm Incident for a period of three weeks. He served as a Division Supervisor on the Rock Mountain (GA) and Ward (OR) Fires as well as a Task Force Leader on the Salmon August Complex (CA). Johnson also served as Incident Commander Type 4 for two weeks on the Cowbell and Parliament Wildfires as they transitioned back to home unit management on Big Cypress National Preserve in south Florida. Chris Foster served as Engine Boss Trainee for two weeks on Sheldon-Hart Mountain NWR (OR) Severity. Ame New served as remote dispatcher for Hurricane Irma response. Pedro Ardapple and K. Minor served as FFT2 for four weeks in Montana.

Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee
Chad Fondren (ENGB) took Noxubee’s Type 6 engine to Oklahoma and Merritt Island NWR in Florida with Brad Bradford, Glenn Cato, Hunter Edmondson and Brandon Bleiler as crew members. Chad also worked as a crew member on the Service Helicopter in Wyoming and Utah and in the Florida Keys on severity after the hurricane. Eddie Harsh (ENGB) went to Merritt Island on fire detail on the Type 6 engine with Steven Lewis and Jake Gross as crew members. Eddie also worked as a GISS-T in Oregon and Okefenokee NWR. Paul Reynolds was detailed with the Blue Team to Big Cypress Preserve in Florida and two details to Okefenokee NWR. Eddie and Paul also assisted Sandhill Crane on a wildfire. Steven Lewis was detailed to California as EQMG (t)

Southeast Louisiana Complex
The year started off with staff assisting with the Hurricane Matthew Response on Refuges and Fish Hatcheries along the Atlantic coast. Complex personnel also assisted with Hurricane Harvey response in Texas, and Hurricane Irma Response in Florida. Complex fire personnel assisted with wildfires at Mississippi



Chris Nothstine at CPT G-07 Rx Burn, credit USFWS/ Jeff ‘Bunk’ Twiss

Sandhill Crane, Oklahoma Spring 2017 wildfire season, the West Mims wildfire at Okefenokee NWR, the Cowbell Fire (Florida Panther NWR/Big Cypress National Park), and western fires in Nevada, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Oregon.

Refuge fire personnel served in the following capacities:

Danny Breaux: ENGB, READ, FFT1

Chris Le Rouge: TFLD, HMGB, ICT4, STOP, CDLA

Grant Lovato: ENGB, HECM, STOP

Brad Kemp: SEC1

Southwest Louisiana Complex
The complex(SWLA) staff began FY17 by supporting the Screwworm Incident at the Florida Keys NWR Complex, five employees spent time in the Florida Keys on this incident. The next large incident that complex staff assisted with was the West Mims fire at Okefenokee NWR. A type 6 Engine from Southwest Louisiana spent two months at Okefenokee NWR assigned to the West Mims fire with Complex firefighters staffing it for the duration. Jon King also spent time detailed to the West Mims fire as the Helicopter Manager for the Service helicopter. Three Type-2 IA handcrews were sent out of the Louisiana Interagency Coordination Center this year and Southwest Louisiana supported each crew with at least one firefighter and a crew truck.

All of the SWLA fire qualified staff took assignments outside the complex to help with wildfire response and the implementation of prescribed fire treatments. It is important to note that many of these assignments provided valuable training opportunities for SWLA staff, for example: Dozer Operator, Specialty Tracked Engine Operator, Faller Type 2, Engine Boss, Crew Boss, Helicopter Crewmember, and Incident Commander Type 5. At the end of the year SWLA staff returned to South Florida to assist with Hurricane Irma response.

Gulf Coast Complex
Sixteen responders took 42 assignments off-zone, for a total of 1,041 shifts. Responders were assigned to incidents in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. Through the Severity months in the fall and spring, the complex sent multiple employees out on assignment. The next large incident that was supported by the complex was the West Mims fire in the spring of 2017. Personnel and equipment from the complex would spend the next couple of months at Okefenokee NWR. The complex sent a motor grader, an excavator, a muskeg, and a D5K with trailer plow. Sami Gray served as an OSC2 trainee on the West Mims fire and majority of the staff had multiple assignments.

Immediately following the West Mims fire, western fire activity picked up and resource orders were filled by complex employees. Rebecca Goosman and Chris Nothstine both went out on the service ship for assignments as HECMs in Wyoming, Utah, California, Nevada, Oregon and Idaho. Scott Saucier and Bert Rager went to the Sheldon Hart NWR to serve as ENGB. James Bates, Bryan Barrett, Daniel Moss, and James McClelland all responded as SEC1 during the western fire season. Jeff ‘Bunk’ Twiss served as an IRIN for multiple fires out west during the peak of the season. Melissa Perez took a training assignment as a PIOF during the western fire season.



Sunlight filters through the smoke and trees during a prescribed fire at Felsenthal NWR, credit USFWS/Ame New.

The Hurricane Irma response put ZFMO Sami Gray in her third off-zone ICT3 assignment in the fiscal year and required more support from the complex. Six other responders from the complex supported the response to Hurricane Irma by filling the following roles: TFLD, TIME, EDRC, CORD, THSP and SECM.

Training
All red-carded personnel attended RT130 refresher trainings.

Of Note
Gulf Coast Complex
Prescribed Fire Specialist Scott Saucier (MS-MSR) serves as Contracting Officer’s Representative for several projects at Bon Secour NWR, Grand Bay NWR and Grand Bay NERR (National Estuarine Research Reserve. Funding for several of these projects is derived from the settlements and penalties that resulted from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010.

■ National Fish and Wildlife Grant for Grand Bay restoration.

■ Natural Resource Damage Assessment grant for Grand Bay NWR and Grand Bay NERR restoration. Includes funding for acquisition, monitoring and restoration.

■ Burned Area Restoration funds for treatment of invasive exotics after the Grand Bature Fire.

■ Collaborative project with Wildlife Mississippi and NERR to fund Student Conservation Association Veterans fire crew to accomplish Rx/Restoration work on public and private lands.

■ Four fuel reduction/WUI contracts to treat one site at Bon Secour and three sites at MS-MSR.

■ Collaborated with NRCS to use equipment and treat exotics at MS-MSR.

Scott Saucier and Chris Nothstine served as Refuge Liaisons for the Student Conservation Association Veterans Fire Crew. This also involved coordinating with the co-sponsoring organization Wildlife Mississippi. The crew stayed in Refuge housing, completed work projects, participated in prescribed fires and a wildfire, obtained DOI Medical Clearance, and completed S-211 Portable Pumps and Water Use training.

Rebecca Goosman became the first firefighter in Zone 7 to qualify for the position of Prevention Education Team Member (PETM).

A-D Employee Herman Hall served as Expanded Dispatch Coordinator (CORD) on several incidents during the year. With the encouragement of Zone FMO Sami Gray, and assistance at various times from dispatchers Jeff ‘Bunk’ Twiss (MS-MSR), Ame New (LA-DRR), and Cynthia Branham (FL-MIR), Herman has developed an Expanded Dispatch capability that can function remotely in support of incidents anywhere in Region 4.

Southeast Louisiana Complex
The local Fox 8 news anchor John Snell did a story on prescribed burning at Big Branch Marsh NWR. Danny Breaux did a great job explaining how, why, and what we do for the red-cockaded woodpeckers.

<http://www.fox8live.com/story/35277068/wildlife-refuge-managers-intentionally-set-fires-to-garden-a-forest>

Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee
In addition to prescribed fires and incident response, Sam D Hamilton Noxubee employees were busy this year with habitat improvement, timber inventory and the 1.5 miles North Bluff Lake levee project.

Honors, Awards, Committees
Zone 7 FMO Sami Gray (MS-MSR) served on the National FWS Fire Management Branch Committee for implementation of the Director’s Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

Matthew Johnson (AR-FSR) continues to serve on the statewide, interagency Fire Danger Operating board.

Jon King (LA-CPR) served on the Work Force Planning Committee for Region 4’s Fire Program.

Staffing Changes
Southeast Louisiana Complex
Grant Lovato was hired in January as the Equipment Operator. Grant formerly worked at Phoenix BLM, Desert NWR and McFadden NWR as a seasonal employee. Prior to that, he was an AD hire at MS Sandhill Crane and Southeast Louisiana Refuges.

Regional Office

Year Overview Wildfire

The Southeast Region experienced an increased wildfire workload in FY17 including a long-duration large fire at Okefenokee NWR that hosted three 21-day IMT rotations in April and May. The Fall fire season in the Southern Area was historic with most of the FWS fire qualified personnel assisting at some point between mid October to early December. The start of the Spring fire season began in Mississippi and Florida with several extended-attack fires on Service lands. In total, the region responded to 178 wildfires burning 133,369 acres on FWS lands in FY17; six of those fires were managed for resource benefit, burning a total of 1,251 acres.

A higher than normal number of long-term severity funding requests were completed this FY. Merritt Island NWR (Zone 5), Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR (Zone 7), Lower Suwannee NWR (Zone 4), and Okefenokee NWR (Zone

2) all received long term funding. The National Key Deer Refuge was in consideration for long term severity after Hurricane Irma, but it was decided to continue to short term severity until the end of the fiscal year, or if conditions no longer warranted the additional staffing.

Southeast Region personnel (both fire and non-fire funded) supported suppression efforts across the country, from Alaska to Puerto Rico, in addition to the regional workload. There were 50 Service employees that participated on the three interagency IMTs in the Southern Area. These teams were deployed in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Florida and Montana this fiscal year and created great opportunities for the development of our workforce, while providing valuable oversight to units experiencing complex incidents.

Burned Area Emergency Response
There were four Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) Projects funded in

FY 2017 to assist in supporting wildfire recovery efforts on National Wildlife Refuges in the Southeast Region. Three of the four projects involved treatments that help prevent further damages to wildlife habitat caused by the spread of invasive species in burned areas.

The BAR plan for the 2015 Last Dance Fire on ARM Loxahatchee NWR involves treatments of the invasive Melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) and Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*). This project is in its second of three year funding (end date July 2018).

The BAR plan for the 2016 Grand Bature Fire at Grand Bay NWR includes treatments of the spread of the invasive cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) and Chinese Tallowtree (*Triadica sebifera*). This project will be completed in February 2019 with a prescribed burn planned for FY 2018.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Assignment/State
Josh O'Connor		UGA Marchmester	LTAN		DIVS/TN, CA LTAN-T/ OR SOPL-T/GA, TN, MT
Jon Wallace	S-520	S-490, S-491, PFTC Agency Administrator Workshop, M-581, LFML, L480			FBAN/GA,NC, OSC1(t)/ NC, GA
Vince Carver					RESL-T/MT
Sue Wilder					RESL/ NC, FL PSC3/ Hurricane Matthew, Irma
Steven Toro	L-280				FFT1/Various, FFT1/GA, FFT1/PR
Anthony DiMaggio	Forest Ecology				HMGB(T)/UT, ENGB/ GA
Ryan McLellan	HE Training				TPOP/GA
Brian Pippin	Forest Ecology			ICT4/ HEQB	HEQB/GA, HMGB/ Various
Robert Trincado					DIVS/GA, DIVS/PR
Dylan Scott	Rx-301/341, S-215, S-330				ICT4(T)/MT
Mike Housh		RX-301/341, S-230, S-330, S-390, S-200, S-231, S-219, L-280	FBAN		FBAN(T)/MT



USFWS Southeast Regional Burn Boss Refresher attendees at Eufuala NWR, February 2017, credit: USFWS.

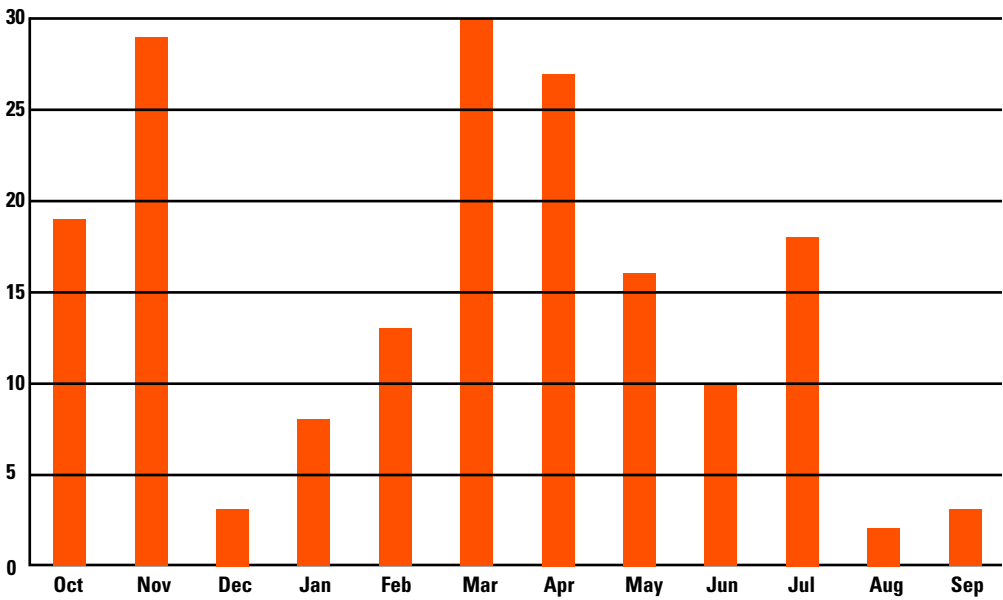
The third project to treat invasive species included the removal of the invasive cabbage palm trees (*Sabal palmetto*) in habitat burned by the 2016 Florida Panther Fire. This project will end in July 2019.

The BAR plan for the 2015 Disaster Fire at Laguna Cartagena NWR in Puerto Rico, included restoration of native dry forest woody species killed by the wildfire as part of an earlier restoration effort. This project was in its final year in FY 2017, however, due to hurricane impacts from Hurricane Maria and Irma, this project may be approved for funding for two additional years to protect the restoration efforts to date.

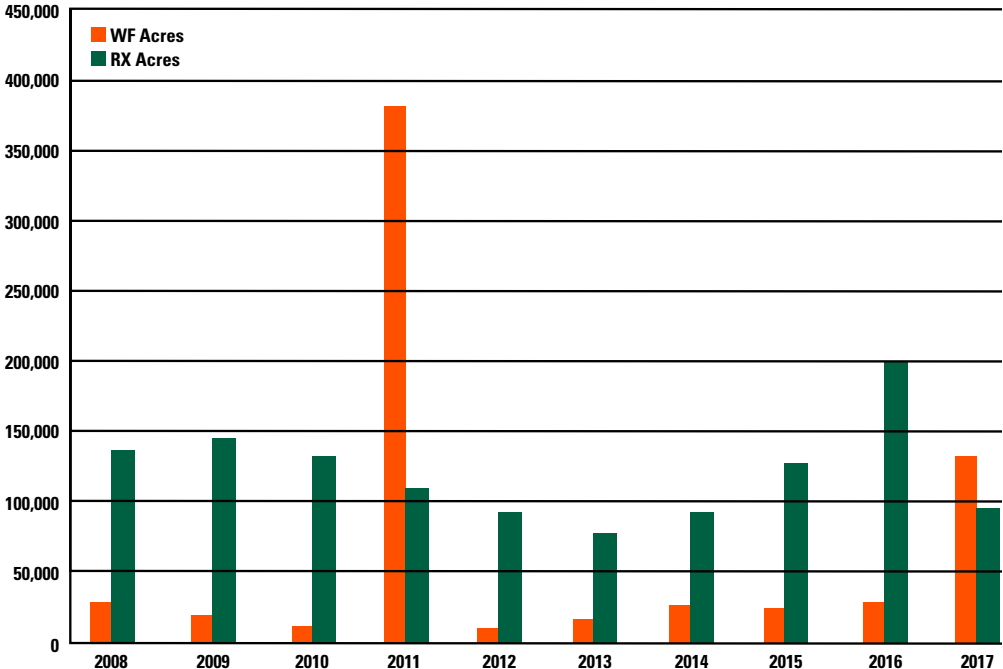
There was one new BAR plan submission approved which will begin in FY2018 for restoration of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) forests unable to recover naturally following the 2017 West Mims Fire at Okefenokee NWR. No Emergency Stabilization (ES) plans were submitted for funding in FY 2017.

Fuels Management
The Southeast Region’s fiscal year 2017 total acres managed with prescribed fire and mechanical treatments were greatly reduced from the previous fiscal year due to increased wildfire workload in the Fall and Spring fire seasons in the Southeast. Fall of 2016 only saw three prescribed fires conducted on FWS Lands due to the GACC being at a PL5 for most of October and all of November with state-wide burn bans in place for a majority of the states in the Southern Area. The window to conduct prescribed fires was drastically reduced for most of the region to the first three months of 2017. 80% of all prescribed fires were conducted in January through March, with 88% of the acres being treated in those months as well. The West Mims Fire at Okefenokee, which started

Region 4 Wildfire Starts FY 2017



Region 4 Wildfire and Treatment Acres FY 2008-2017



Regional Office

continued

in early April, drastically reduced most of the refuges down to minimum staffing levels for wildfire response during the Region’s normally active prescribed fire season. The Region accomplished 91% (49,145 acres) of the FY17 target for acreage treated, as determined through the DOI Hazardous Fuels Reduction process.

Additional funds through internal and external partnerships were used to help treat an additional 49,608 acres. All treatments were accomplished in a safe and efficient manner, reducing hazardous fuel loading and maintaining the health of fire-dependent landscapes. This year, the Region treated 44,150 acres of hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface.

The Southeast Region has eight positions that work with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) to conduct prescribed fire at numerous USAF installations throughout the region. These employees coordinate detailers to assist with prescribed fire operations. In FY17, over 190 prescribed fires were conducted on USAF lands, totaling over 121,000 acres. This partnership with the USAF has greatly improved our relationship with local cooperators near these installations, as well as providing quality training opportunities for USFWS employees.

Training and Qualifications

In FY17, 52 position task books were completed by Service personnel in the Southeast. The SE participated in the interagency priority trainee dispatching process “Priority Trainee List” and had 32 individuals benefit from the program.

The Service continues to participate in the Tennessee/Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy. We are represented on the steering committee, and we provide cadre and students to many of the classes taught.

All Hazard

In FY17, Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, and Maria impacted the region to the extent that regional IMTs were deployed. Hurricane Harvey did not severely

Fire Reports for FY 2017

National Wildlife Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Alligator River	6	8,491.0	1	.1
ARM Loxahatchee	1	3,390.4		
Bayou Savage			1	.3
Big Branch Marsh	9	1,215.7	3	50.6
Bogue Chitto	1	53.0	2	.2
Cabo Rojo	2	128.2	1	4.0
Cache River	1	211.5	1	53.0
Cahaba River	1	190.0	1	11.5
Cameron Prairie	4	1,068.0		
Carolina Sandhills	19	5,805.0	8	65.7
Cedar Island			5	.5
Dale Bumpers White River			1	20.1
D’Arbonne	2	174.6		
Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin	9	2,397.0	2	.2
Felsenthal	7	1,975.2	2	300.2
Florida Panther	8	5,839.0	5	504.3
Grand Bay			19	260.8
Hobe Sound			1	.1
J.N. “Ding” Darling	6	95.2		
Key Cave	3	141.5		
Lacassine			1	161.0
Laguna Cartagena	2	135.8		
Lake Woodruff	4	4,276.0		
Lower Suwannee	8	1,867.0		
Mackay Island	5	1,887.9	1	3.0
Merritt Island	8	5,285.0	13	13,758.7
Mississippi Sandhill Crane	26	3,990.3	30	235.0
Mountain Longleaf			1	29.0
National Key Deer	4	88.3		
Okefenokee	6	2,405.0	8	115,124.4
Pea Island	2	852.3		
Pelican Island		1	143.0	
Piedmont	10	6,896.2	1	.1
Pocosin Lakes	3	693.2	2	45.6

National Wildlife Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Pond Creek			2	1.1
Sabine	9	28,266.0	5	1,071.0
Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee	13	7,643.0	10	37.7
Santee	4	966.1		
Savannah	4	544.7	2	.2
St. Johns			7	1,311.4
St. Marks	6	1,752.9	2	15.3
St. Vincent	2	844.3	1	.1
Ten Thousand Islands	2	10		
Upper Ouachita	2	534.4		
Vieques	1	44.9	36	160.1
Wheeler			1	.2
Grand Total	200	100,158.6	178	133,368.6

impact the Southeast Region, but was supported with LE and watercraft resources; and an IMT was placed on standby, but not requested. All of these responses leaned heavily on the fire program for leadership and qualified personnel. Many of the refuges impacted by these storms will have an increased workload to maintain established fire lines in FY18.

The New World Screwworm outbreak at National Key Deer NWR infested the endangered Key Deer in October 2016. This long duration incident (~ six months) required an IMT and many fire staff familiar with incident management.

Planning

The Region maintained a database that includes 71 Fire Management Plans. The field units performed annual FMP reviews and provided updates as needed. Master agreements were updated for the states of Florida and Georgia. A new FMP was reviewed and completed for the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR, the Clarks River NWR, and the Welaka NFH.

Cooperative Relationships

A database for statewide master fire agreements with the ten (10) southeastern states and Puerto Rico is maintained annually. The Agreement with

Georgia was renewed this year.

R4 Fire modified their cooperative agreement this fiscal year with Tall Timbers Research Station to partner in efforts to train private landholders in the planning and implementation of prescribed fire on their lands adjacent to ours.

We also modified our Intra-Agency Agreement (IAA) with the Southeast Region of the National Park Service to facilitate cooperative prescribed burning efforts throughout the region.

Preparedness

The R4 Fire Management Program maintains a system of certifying Annual Preparedness Reviews at stations receiving preparedness funding. Twenty (20) stations are on the list and dates of completion are tracked to help ensure annual compliance.

Fire Ecology

Much of the fire ecology efforts in FY 2017 involved coordination of Burned Area Rehabilitation projects and supporting projects of the National Fire Ecology Team. A large effort is underway (FY17-18) to collect, organize and archive all post-wildfire recovery plans and final reports in the FWS Service Catalog (ServCat). In addition, efforts were made this fiscal year to archive all refuge fire atlas data projects into one ServCat record.

Budget

Strategic workforce planning continues as budget forecasts are still declining. The Region started comprehensive workforce planning efforts that incorporated all the programs under the NWRS. This significant undertaking focuses on identifying the regional priorities and

developing a plan that puts resources in the best locations to best serve the priorities. This endeavor included over 90 individuals from all disciplines and its products are expected early in CY18.

Unfortunately, with budgets declining again in FY17, and forecasts not favorable for out-years, Region 4 is not finished “rightsizing” the organization. The Southeast Region began FY17 with 86 FTEs and through attrition now has 82 regional fire-funded FTEs. The workforce continues to be supplemented by temporary workers, collateral duty employees and our partners.

Of Note

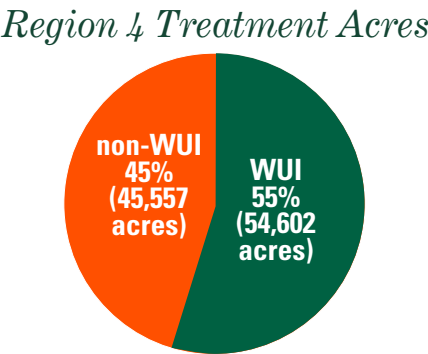
Jon Wallace and Josh O’Connor assisted R1 (Northwest) during the summer fire season. Kevin Scasny continues to work with the contractor and administrators to implement transition to the NIFC (National Interagency Fire Center) web server.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Rick Struhar serves on the Southern Area Training Working Team, the Southern Area Incident Business Management Committee, and the FWS National Fire Business Task Group. Josh O’Connor serves on the FWS National Fuels Working Team and the FWS National Data Assessment Team. Sue Wilder serves on the National Fire Ecology Team and as the Southeast Regional BAER Coordinator. Jon Wallace is the chair of the NWCG National Fire Danger Rating System Committee.

Staffing Changes

Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) Coordinator Mike Dueitt was selected as the Southeast USFS AD for National Fire Plan in August 2017. Mike’s leadership at PFTC will be missed.



Southeast Region Fire Management Districts

Southeast Regional Fire Office (Atlanta)
Regional Fire Management Coordinator:
Vince Carver

Deputy Regional Fire Management
Coordinator: Jon Wallace

Regional Prescribed Fire Coordinator:
Josh O'Connor

Regional Fire Manager Specialist:
Rick Struhar

Regional Fire Geographer: Kim Eldridge

Regional Fire Office Assistant:
Margaret Hale

Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)
SACC Assistant Coordinator: Vacant

SACC Meteorologist: Kevin Scasny

Tallahassee Regional Fire Office (TLH)
Prescribed Fire Training Center
Director: Vacant

Slidell Regional Fire Staff (SLI)
Regional Fire Ecologist: Sue Wilder

Southeast Region Fire Management Zones

Fire Zone 1
FMO: Bert Plante

Alligator River NWR Fire Ops Specialist:
Donnie Harris

Pocosin Lakes NWR Refuge FMO:
Gregg Buckalew

Fire Zone 2
FMO: Rob Wood

Zone PFS: Greg Askins

Carolina Sandhills NWR Refuge FMO:
Mark Parker

Okefenokee NWR FMO: Reese Kerbow

Okefenokee NWR AFMO:
Reggie Forcine

Piedmont NWR PFS: John Mason

Fire Zone 4
FMO: Greg Titus

St. Marks NWR AFMO: Josh Havird

Lower Suwannee NWR Refuge FMO:
Victor Doig

Fire Zone 5
FMO: Vacant

Merritt Island NWR PFS (MIR):
Michael Good

Merritt Island NWR Fire Ops Specialist:
Ryan Sharpe

ARM Loxahatchee NWR FMO (LXR):
Tom Ledbetter

Fire Zone 6
FMO: Cass Palmer

Florida Panther NWR AFMO:
Byron Hart

PFS (FPR): Greg Suszek

Caribbean Islands NWR: James Padilla

Fire Zone 7
FMO: Sami Gray

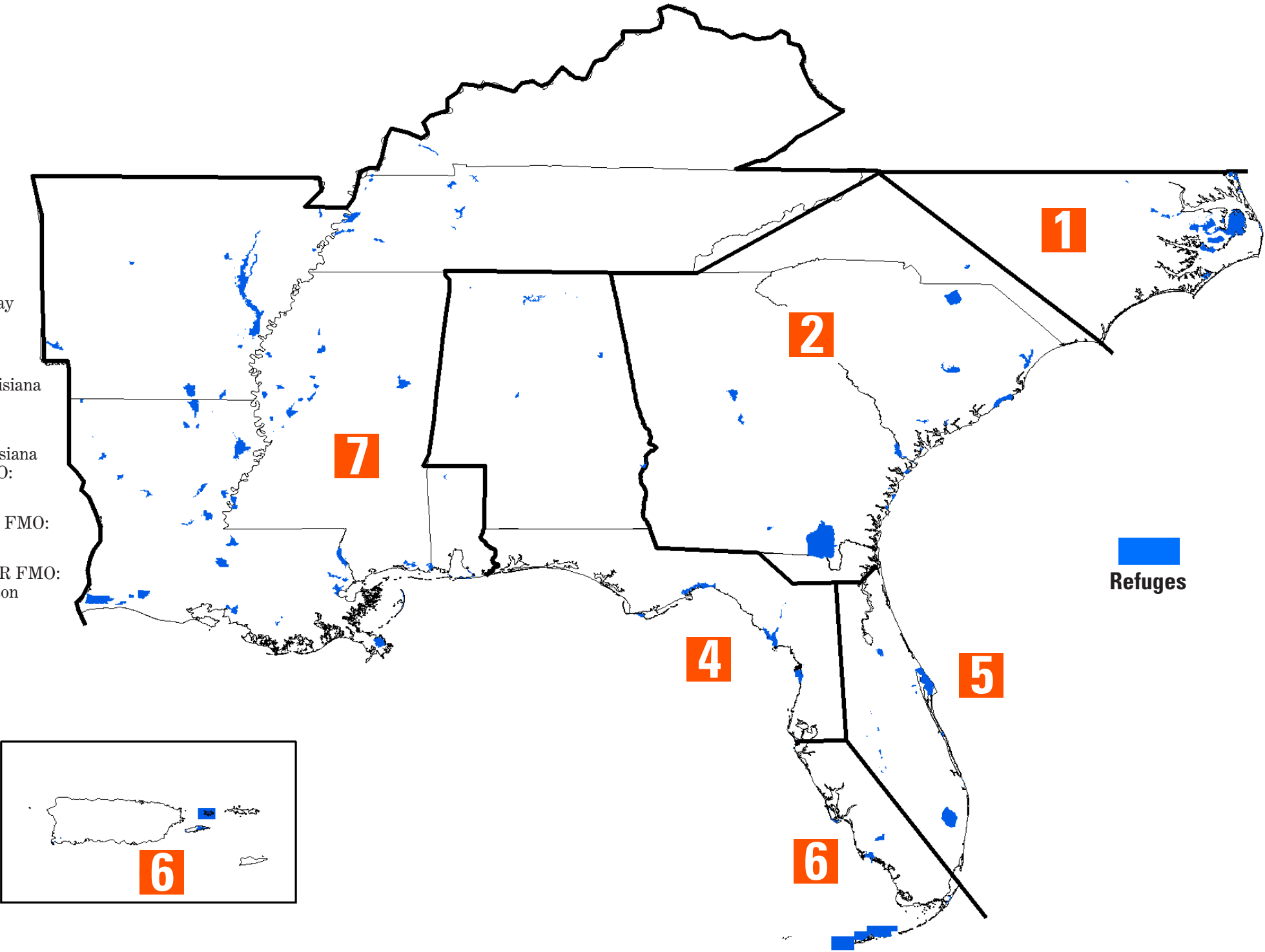
District PFS:
Scott Saucier

Southwest Louisiana
Complex FMO:
Jon King

Southeast Louisiana
Complex AFMO:
Chris LeRouge

Noxubee NWR FMO:
Paul Reynolds

Felsenthal NWR FMO:
Matthew Johnson



**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Fire Management
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30345**

**<http://www.fws.gov/southeastfire>
<http://twitter.com/USFWSFireSE>**

Keeping Fire on Our Side

For thousands of years, humans have had an active partnership with fire. When respected and managed with care, fire can be a beneficial ally rather than an awesome opponent. Thoughtful preparation and action by public managers and private property owners can help keep fire's effects positive. Together, we can keep fire on our side.

